

EDUCAÇÃO E DESENVOLVIMENTO SOCIAL  
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
EDUCACIÓN Y DESAROLLO SOCIAL

millenium 

Millenium, 2(6), 69-76.

en

**A TRAGÉDIA DOS VENCEDORES NAS *TROIANAS* DE SÉNECA**  
**THE WINNERS' DRAMA IN SENECA'S *TROADES***  
**EL DRAMA DE LOS GANADORES EN LAS TROYANAS DE SÉNECA**

*João Paulo Rodrigues Balula*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Education of Viseu, Polytechnic Institute of Viseu, CI&DETS, Viseu, Portugal

João Paulo Rodrigues Balula - [jpbalula@esev.ipv.pt](mailto:jpbalula@esev.ipv.pt)



---

**Corresponding Author**

*João Paulo Rodrigues Balula*  
Escola Superior de Educação de Viseu  
Rua Maximiano Aragão  
3504 - 501 VISEU - PORTUGAL  
[jpbalula@esev.ipv.pt](mailto:jpbalula@esev.ipv.pt)

RECEIVED: 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2017

ACCEPTED: 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

## RESUMO

**Introdução:** A literatura clássica tem grande importância para a formação de leitores críticos. Por essa razão, este artigo propõe uma leitura atual das dificuldades dos vencedores que se evidenciam nas *Troianas* de Sêneca: Pirro, Agamémnon, Ulisses, Aquiles e Helena.

**Desenvolvimento:** Partindo de uma análise de conteúdo da obra, apresenta-se uma reflexão sobre as consequências dos sentimentos e das paixões. Torna-se evidente que quando o ser humano é confrontado consigo próprio e com a sua essência tudo vem à superfície: a virtude mais admirada (a moderação) e os defeitos mais desprezíveis (a arrogância, a brutalidade, a tirania, a hipocrisia e a cobardia).

**Conclusões:** Conclui-se que a preocupação dos vencedores se centra na dúvida acerca do sucesso da viagem de regresso.

**Palavras-chave:** Sêneca; *Troianas*; Vencedores; Sofrimento; Literatura Latina.

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The texts of classical literature are of great importance for the training of critical readers. For this reason, this article proposes a current reading of the winners' difficulties that are evident in Seneca's *Troades*: Pyrrhus, Agamemnon, Ulysses, Achilles, and Helena.

**Development:** Starting from a content analysis of the literary work, a reflection on the consequences of feelings and passions is presented. It becomes evident that when the human being is confronted with himself and with his essence everything comes to the surface: the most admired virtue (moderation) and the most despicable defects (arrogance, brutality, tyranny, hypocrisy and cowardice).

**Conclusions:** It is concluded that the winners' concern focuses on the doubt about the success of the return trip.

**Keywords:** Seneca; *Troades*; Winners; Suffering; Latin Literature.

## RESUMEN

**Introducción:** Los textos de la literatura clásica tienen gran importancia para la formación de lectores críticos. Por esta razón, este artículo propone la lectura actual de las dificultades de los vencedores que se evidencian en las *Troianas* de Sêneca: Pirro, Agamenón, Ulises, Aquiles y Helena.

**Desarrollo:** A partir del análisis de contenido de la obra, se presenta una reflexión sobre las consecuencias de los sentimientos y de las pasiones. Es evidente que cuando el ser humano se enfrenta consigo mismo y con su esencia todo viene a la superficie: la virtud más admirada (la moderación) y los defectos más despreciables (la arrogancia, la brutalidad, la tiranía, la hipocresía y la cobardía).

**Conclusiones:** Se concluye que la preocupación de los ganadores se centra en la duda sobre el éxito del viaje de regreso.

**Palabras clave:** Sêneca; *Troianas*; Ganadores; Sufrimiento; Literatura Latina.

## INTRODUCTION

Classical texts play a relevant role as protagonists of plural identities, of languages and cultures' labyrinths, guiding us, with their relevance criteria, through the language and culture of diversity, educating us towards inclusion and memory. Their critical reading prepares us for the future. Seneca's tragedies privilege speech and reflection over events (Cardoso, 2005). It is in this context that the preservation of all "heritage of human condition" and the reading of Seneca's *Troades* make sense (Matias, 2009), encouraging the thought "on power, fortune and suffering, life and death" (Gama, 2017, p. 8). The fickleness of Fortune as the cause of the present situation has in Troy, and in all its inhabitants, a well visible mark (Caviglia, 1981), providing therefore some timeless teachings:

Moderation should be the constant concern of the mighty and these should continuously doubt the gods' favourable status. A thousand ships or ten years will not be needed for a kingdom to collapse. Not to all does Fortune give as much protection as it does to Troy. (Balula, 2015, p. 305)

Seneca's *Troades* show how this theme is transversal. *Mora* is the main mechanism of the play and unites winners and vanquished in suffering. The vanquished are free from all fears and hopes: in opposition to the theme of captivity, death as freedom comes as the ultimate destination (Caviglia, 1981). Uncertainty regarding the success of the return journey hangs over the winners. The ships departure and the end of *mora maris* may not be more than the transfer of *mora mortis* from the vanquished to the winners.

Considering that "reading is an activity that enables the transmission of wisdom and the relation with past and present knowledge" and that "there is, in reading, a sharing of wisdom and knowledge that is either accepted, or refused, or

problematized" (Balula, 2010, p. 2), this article aims to contribute towards the training of 21st century readers and provide a critical reading of the winners' drama in Seneca's Troades: Pyrrhus, Agamemnon, Ulysses, Achilles and Helena.

Zwierlein (1986) was followed as reference edition.

## 1. DEVELOPMENT

Pyrrhus appears, to the spectator's eyes, as an example of determined and brutal arrogance, of violence always ready to unravel, and of a tyrant's ferocious cruelty. His concern is to secure his father's right, Achilles, to a part in the splitting of the spoils of Troy: a process, after all, of magnifying himself in the eyes of the Achaeans.

Before appearing on the scene, one of his past violent actions is brought to the memory of all spectators from the mouth of Hecuba. As Schetter (1965) says, the old queen's woe prepares the entrance of Pyrrhus. It was him who mercilessly took Priam's life. Thus, in the most violent way, the sanguinary character of Pyrrhus is marked.

In Talthybius's revelation, it is from the mouth of Achilles himself that we learn that to Pyrrhus is reserved the mission to immolate Polyxena.

On Pyrrhus fell Priam's death, and upon him will fall Polyxena's. Pyrrhus is, therefore, the one who completes the mission initiated by his father, although in its most unworthy part: the death of an old man and a damsel.

Being the spectator prepared for what to expect from Pyrrhus's character, the hero comes on the scene in *agon* with Agamemnon. The young man claims the lot due to his father, since, regarding the other chiefs, the deceased is being forgotten. Agamemnon's resistance and the violence of the dialogue clearly demonstrate Pyrrhus's brutality. In Agamemnon's eyes Pyrrhus appears as an immature young man: he does not know how to refrain his impulses, fierceness and insolence.

Achilles's son goes as far as to threaten with death the chief himself, the king of kings. It is from Pyrrhus's mouth that we hear that his hand has long refrained from royal blood, and that Priam claims a companion. These words are full of tragic sarcasm, for only a day has gone by since Priam's death. Pyrrhus, who was capable of committing such an atrocity towards Priam, is now willing to repeat the act towards Agamemnon, in case he cannot achieve what he wants.

Throughout the *agon* with Agamemnon, the young man defends the idea that the winner is allowed everything, including the anguish of the vanquished. Pyrrhus heads the only pair of winners who come into conflict in the play. In this conflict it is possible to glimpse a balance of forces that Pyrrhus can establish by opposing the king of kings with the vigour youth gives him. Pyrrhus has willpower, he is well resolved to achieve his goals.

Achilles's son appears to be hateful in the eyes of the defeated, by his past deeds, and in the eyes of the winner, by his present desires. Nevertheless, he will be invoked by Andromache, when he tries to oppose Ulysses' decision, and save Hector's tomb guaranteed by Achilles. Pyrrhus is part of the strategy set up by Helena to take Polyxena as a bride is taken to the wedding ceremony. That is why the perfidious ambassador enhances the union with the Achaean hero, relative of the gods, as highly honourable for a captive princess and reminds her that the spouse owns a kingdom that extends over vast plains. These ambiguous words only apparently refer to Pyrrhus, as in fact, they designate Achilles, to whom Polyxena is going to be immolated. But, for Andromache there is no greater evil than to see Priam's murderer transformed into the old king and Hecuba's son-in-law. Another clear example of Pyrrhus's cruelty, recognized in the field of the Achaeans itself.

After knowing the result of the draw, Hecuba announces Pyrrhus's entrance. His pace is fast; his look full of threats. Achilles's son truly appears as the rapturous one prepared by Helena.

Hecuba notes, however, a moment of hesitation from Pyrrhus. It is like a quick nod to a rough sketch of humanity that contrasts with all the previous characterization of Pyrrhus. He who took the most brutal attitudes, who enters with a fast pace and a fierce look, pauses for a moment, as if the Polyxena's beauty and the drama of the scene impressed him. This disturbance of Pyrrhus is the beginning of his decline, the decline of the one Hecuba calls the killer of old men.

Likewise, in the nuptial procession, Polyxena's determined march leaves Pyrrhus behind. When she comes near the tomb and Pyrrhus goes to the highest point, the damsel's intrepidity shakes the cruel hero again, who is slow in delivering the fatal blow.

In this way, Pyrrhus seems to confirm the Elder's words when he says that only in the first moment is the winner fierce, since the strength and impetus presented and proven in the first part of the play fade at the end. Nevertheless, he will not fail to commit a new atrocity in the eyes of the winners and the vanquished: the death of a damsel.

Pyrrhus, through a slight allusion, brings up into the play the question of the *mora maris* to which the winners are subject to. It is due to his brutal attitude against Agamemnon that this question reappears and is clearly defined through Calchas. A way to further aggravate, in appearance, the catastrophe of the vanquished.

In the end, the characteristics of Achilles's son are those typical of a tyrant (Herrmann, 1924), a theme which in Seneca is quite frequent (Pociña Pérez, 1976). Seneca seems to reveal, through Pyrrhus, the most repugnant of all winners, how he much learned from the despots of his time: Caligula, Claudius, and Nero (Boella, 1979). As Gama (2017, p. 2) states, "within that scenario, Seneca's work reflects, to some extent, the political situation. Themes such as power, the nature of the soul, death and the changes of fortune are particularly pricey."

## 2. AGAMEMNON: THE DEFEATED WINNER

The King of Kings mirrors the image of the winner that, as Hecuba says, looks at the ruins of Troy fearful and still unsure about the triumph that his army has achieved. Unsure mainly about the consequences this triumph might entail.

Among the winners, Agamemnon deserves especial attention, both for being the king of kings and for the positions he takes. He is certainly one of the most complex characters. There are moments when he seems to have nobility. There are others in which he does not obey the norms of the wisdom he defends.

Therefore, according to Schetter (1965), he has been judged in several ways: by some as a feeble character and by others as a representative of noble humanity. Herrmann (1924) also considers the king of kings a generous, moderate and good sovereign. He goes on saying that of all the kings of the Senecan tragedy, Agamemnon is the noblest and perhaps the most original.

Wen discussing the subject of the main character, Giancotti (1953, pp. 109-110) puts the hypothesis of this being Agamemnon: "*se protagonista significa personaggio in cui i motivi d'un dramma s'adunano e s'incentrano in un motivo fondamentale e comprensivo, protagonista delle "Troiane" non può essere Ecuba, ma Agamennone*".

In his first intervention, Agamemnon tries, through reason, to make Pyrrhus understand that his desires may be justifiable, but must be tempered. In this first moment, he appears to be a defender of a new morality. He presents himself as a moderate, understanding, and patient man. His position as head of the winners is staggering.

But Agamemnon is not only the supreme leader of the winners. In his heart, he elevates himself and presents a vision of life and man that transcends the brutal law of war, the one that authorizes the winner to own the defeated. In the recognition of glory, he understands that the reign is but a vain glow, and in Priam's fate there is a teaching concerning the instability of Fortune which makes men equal, whether they are winners or vanquished. It shows what can be considered a virtue, to which kings should give especial importance to: patience. This judgment, based on an alliteration and an anadiplosis, resembles a self-criticism of his excesses before the accusations Pyrrhus directed at him.

The king of kings evidences his awareness of the precariousness of power, for what was done in ten years requiring a thousand ships, may be accomplished by Fortune in a single moment. It works as a compliment to the glory of Troy that had Fortune by its side for a long time and it is a warning to the Achaeans, liable to lose the protection which at that moment favours them.

This Agamemnon is a transformed man, a man who suffered (Schetter, 1965). The dark premonition of a tragic end illuminates his mind.

Agamemnon appears as the representative of noble humanity. But if, sometimes, this statement seems correct to us, there are moments when would be completely amiss. Accepting that the Senecan theatre truly settles upon the opposition between *bona mens* and *furor*, Agamemnon sometimes appears as representing *bona mens*. He desperately tries to save Polyxena, a role that, in Euripides, naturally belongs to Hecuba, and has the premonition that he is a man at risk. But there are aspects of his character that do not fit in *bona mens*, insofar as the king of kings gives in to impulses of retaliation, when, in *agon* against Pyrrhus, he becomes impetuous and unfair. After all, at the ultimate moment, Agamemnon transfers to the prophet the responsibility of the decision and disappears from the scene.

Agamemnon reveals a double side: on the one hand, he is the king who allowed that enormous excesses were committed in the night of Troy's destruction; on the other hand, he is the ruler who senses misfortune as punishment for the mistakes made and tries, *in extremis*, to prevent it.

He consults the prophet to counteract the offence that Pyrrhus addressed to him, that is, not to be charged as a tyrant. But when Agamemnon declares, "it is upon me that the errors of all fall: he who an evil deed does not forbid, when so able, is commanding it" (Tro., 290-291), he assumes the defence of a personal issue, even if he has to make use of the force that comes from his status as supreme chief in the field.

This commendable purpose, full of humanity, would lead him to present alternatives to avoid human sacrifices to be made. But for Pyrrhus, Agamemnon has none of the virtues he tries to inculcate. Achilles's son considers him to be tyrant of kings (now proud, then fearful, usurper other winners' spoils, prone to passions for women who should not belong to him). Therefore, either he gives in to the demand or Pyrrhus's sword will give Priam the company of another king.

Faced with this brutal threat, Agamemnon's reaction, though sarcastic, is not what would be expected of a commander-in-chief obliged to severely punish the arrogance of a dependent. The perceived impression is of a certain weakness or even cowardice. And Pyrrhus himself does not fail to point out that in the past such weakness had already been observed.

While Pyrrhus seeks arguments to defend contradictory deeds (he says that Achilles was a great king when he spared Priam's life, but also seeks to justify his own barbarity towards the same king), Agamemnon explores the bloodthirsty young man's difficulty to sustain his positions as a defender of his father's attitudes. When the young man strikes back, Agamemnon defends himself again with words that explain the ideal behaviour of a moderate king. To what would be, according to custom, legally permitted to the winner, Agamemnon opposes much higher values of honour and moderation. But those arguments are fleeting: Agamemnon returns to maleficence. Therefore, Pyrrhus, in his reply, emphasizes that the king of kings belongs to a family of fratricides.

Facing the inability to persuade Pyrrhus through words, in the absence of arguments that rationally lead him to renounce his determination, Agamemnon recoils. He claims that he could suppress Pyrrhus's insolent words and subdue his audacity (which

throughout the *agon* he was not able to demonstrate) but, in the same way he is capable of sparing the captives, he also spares him. He does not want to be known as a despotic sovereign.

Therefore, in order to escape from an embarrassing situation, he transfers to Calchas the responsibility of the final decision, although, judging from past experience, he foresees it will not favour him.

Effectively Calchas will provoke the defeat of Agamemnon and of his alleged principles. Besides Polyxena's death, the prophet still demands the death of Astyanax. The past returns in the present, but it is more annihilating insofar as it clearly weighs on the act of abuse committed by the winners.

After this complete defeat of his interests and principles, Agamemnon disappears from the play. The fate of the vanquished will be left to Ulysses and Pyrrhus. The name of the king of kings will only be remembered in the secondary nucleus of the play, the draw of the captive women. His prize will be Cassandra, the princess who the Trojans hoped to have been spared from the affront of the draw, given her prophetic gifts.

Agamemnon is the first winner to fear the consequences of the *mora maris* that might become *mora mortis*. After all you could say that "fate guides whoever follows it willingly, but drags those who refuse to follow it" (Campos, 1991, p. XXXV). Agamemnon seems to be the demonstration of this principle defended by Seneca. He is a vanquished winner who represents the communion of man in pain and in submission to fate, embodying the most dense, central and unifying motif of the tragedy. He disappears after Calchas's intervention, but reappears whenever the sharing of pain between vanquished and winners is concerned. However, while embodying this central motif, he does not exhaust it. He lacks magnanimity in sacrifice and constancy in purpose, which are the strong man's appanage. The pain he intended to avoid will be imposed upon him.

### 3. ULYSSES: THE FEAR OF A RESURRECTION

From early on, expectations of fear were created towards Ulysses. His entrance is announced by the Elder. Straightway, Andromache describes the manner he presents himself.

Ulysses's arrival is not desired by Andromache and his characteristics are repudiated. According to Andromache he plans some ruse, because from a perfidious person like Ulysses nothing else can be expected.

But the first words he utters contradict these expectations. He introduces himself as the representative of the Achaeans and of the gods. What he is doing is not his responsibility. His voice is the expression of all winners.

Interested in Andromache's collaboration, he does not hesitate to speak to her heart, using the resources that can allow a greater approximation. His first intervention is an effort for cooperation. At the end, he addresses Andromache calling her by her name, which represents a clear seduction attempt. Then, he accrues a series of metaphors from the animal and vegetal world that, in a most beautiful way, exalt the figure of Astyanax. This prominence of the victim, according to Ulysses's the cause of the *mora* that holds the ships. As if guessing Andromache's thoughts, he asks her not to consider him cruel, as the mission was entrusted to him by fate. Andromache should understand the need to eliminate a potential avenger. But for a mother, to request a child's death is an outrage. Ulysses, feeling that Andromache responds with deception, hardens his position. He resorts to the enumeration of the most diverse physical tortures. However, Andromache rejects this intimidation process.

Ulysses realises that he is treading a wrong path and no longer makes use of the direct threat. He now engages into hidden threats. Andromache is, however, able to lead him into a situation of doubt: should he believe in Astyanax's death that the mother herself announces?

This situation of doubt evolves to a critical point. Facing the gravity of the oath uttered by Andromache, for a moment, Ulysses believes in the child's death. But, as leader of a mission, he questions himself: if the Achaeans ask him, what evidences did he gather of Astyanax's death, what could he answer? However, Andromache's oath is too strong not to be true.

But Ulysses does not cease to observe Andromache, who stirs anxiously, as if fearing something, which makes him return to the state of doubt. That reaction is not evitable for a mother who lost her child. If such had happened, Andromache would have nothing to fear. This reflection, showing a lucid and cold Ulysses, gives him strength to get back to the attack with mental torture, which he will carry out in several stages and with different degrees of cruelty.

At first, he describes, without ceasing to observe Andromache, the death to which Astyanax was destined: he would be precipitated from the only existing tower. Facing the brutality of the revelation, Andromache shows a bigger disturbance.

Before Andromache can recover, Ulysses quickly triggers a new form of torture. He orders the soldiers to look for Astyanax and describes the search as if the child had already been found. Andromache is disturbed again, but tries to compose herself and find an excuse for her fear.

Faced with the partial failure of this attempt, Ulysses resorts to a new stratagem. Assuming that the son is dead, it is necessary, as compensation, to destroy Hector's tomb. It is the solution Calchas points out so that the ships may leave. Andromache still tries to resist and find arguments that prevent Ulysses from taking that decision. But the Achaean chief feels that soon he will be victorious in this unequal struggle. He orders the soldiers to destroy the tomb. His position of strength forces Andromache to break.

When the miserable mother kneels at his feet, Ulysses reacts as someone who was being deceived. He cannot demonstrate gentleness without seeing the child before him. The barren brutality he manifests in face of the supplications is the consequence of the need to ensure, at all cost, the success of the mission.

After the victory over Andromache is guaranteed, Ulysses gives signs of commotion, but he thinks about the future of the winners and persists in his initial determination.

When Andromache insists on the pleas, Ulysses transfers to the prophet the responsibility for Astyanax's death. Thus, he demonstrates a hypocrisy to which he had not yet resorted.

This change in character induces Andromache to insult Ulysses: he is a schemer of deceits, an artificer of crimes, a fearful warrior who only has the courage to kill a child. Wounded in his pride, Ulysses responds harshly. But facing Andromache's humiliation, Ulysses returns to a more subdued tone and grants the small *mora* that Andromache begged him, to bid farewell to her son. As the farewell delays, the military chief gets impatient and claims an end to it, thus preparing for the final verses of the scene where the brutal cut of delays is seen in the name of the need to suppress the *mora*.

It would not be expected, after this success, that Ulysses had in luck the most undesired spoil, Hecuba. As Gama (2017, p. 8) states, "Hecuba functions as a mixture of the misery and despair that assailed the trojan women and the city." This piece of news, given by Helena, leads the old woman to insult her master: captive, besieged by all evils, she feels ashamed of her owner and not of captivity, of that who owns a barren island locked in the seas. Thus, Ulysses functions as the first symbol of Hecuba's possible revenge: the queen succeeded in managing, at least, that the Achaean chief did not receive a young female prisoner.

Only near the end, in the Messenger's explanation, Ulysses reappears. He who, with such difficulty, had taken Astyanax from Andromache, was encharged with leading the child to the execution tower. Ulysses's paced gait, though justified by the ritual of sacrifice, contrasts with Astyanax's determination by walking forward towards death without fear. This determination touches Ulysses.

But the last mission Ulysses had been given has a frustrating end. The Achaean chief should throw Astyanax from the tower, after repeating the words that Calchas recommended and invoking the deities. But he is interrupted in the middle of the ritual by Astyanax's anticipation. The final image that is left to us is that of a diminished chief in front of the greatness of a child that astonishes all.

Placed in a central position of the play, Ulysses represents the Achaeans' onslaught in eliminating even the most remote hypothesis of a new resurrection of Troy. He confirms this idea when he says that if the gods had not determined so, such was the chiefs' desire. It is the military chief performing a political mission. In this mission he takes advantage of all the strategies he knows and manages them according to needs and the resistance of the adversary. Confirming the eminently secular character of his mission is the fact that he only makes three brief references to the gods (Tro., 528, Tro., 533, Tro., 749). Ulysses only presents Astyanax's death as the deities' determination when he fears to give in to emotion. The point is that upon the success of his mission depends the end of the *mora maris*. The political aspect clearly emerges first.

The compassion for Andromache and the admiration for Astyanax are, however, signs of humanization and reveal the presence of an inner drama, though smothered. As if he sensed that the *mora maris* is *mora mortis* for both defeated and winners.

#### 4. ACHILLES: THE VICTORIOUS GHOST

In the winners' field, someone who no longer belongs to the world of the living must be included, because of its extreme importance in the economy of the play: the shadow of Achilles.

From Talthybius's mouth, we learn of the wrath of the deceased: sea and earth in convulsion seem to support the ghost's demand, and the Tritons' song foreshadows the engagement consummation, creating an atmosphere of great tension (Silva, 2008). The Achaeans forgot to attribute to him a part of the war prey and he demands Polyxena's sacrifice upon his ashes. Achilles's sarcastic words ("*Ite, ite, inertes*") will find a distant echo in Hecuba's mouth, which likewise contains a clear threat: "*Ite, ite, Danai*" (Tro., 1165).

The ghost's demand reappears in the *agon* between Pyrrhus, his son, and Agamemnon, and will be confirmed by Calchas's oracle. It becomes, therefore, a fundamental element in the outcome of the tragedy: Polyxena will be sacrificed in his name to become his wife in the Elysian Fields.

After recovering from the shock caused by the news brought by Helena, Hecuba identifies Achilles's harmful presence. His "real" presence is, moreover, underlined by the way the earth absorbs the victim's blood.

Achilles's demands determine another victory of the Achaeans over the Trojans, insofar as they annihilate the last hopes left to the vanquished: Polyxena and Astyanax.

Achilles, the cause of the *mora* to which the winners are subject and of the revenge they are exposed to for having shed innocent blood, still asserts his will. The other deceased, the vanquished Hector, will not, apparently, achieve his goals.



## 5. HELENA: THE TREACHERY OF A MESSAGE

Placing Helena among the winners may give rise to justifiable reservations. She does not present herself as a winner, but she accepted a perfidious mission towards the vanquished. She lived for ten years with the Trojans, but now, a few hours after the fall of Troy, she is with Menelaus.

Helena's situation is marked by the ambiguity of the circumstance she finds herself in. She accepts a mission that accentuates her balance between the field of the winners and that of the vanquished: a mission that in no way dignifies her, since she is being used by the winners. By placing her among the winners, the link between the drama of the winners and that of the vanquished is established.

From the first moment, Helena is struggling with herself. She wants to inculcate herself as someone who is dragging a fatality. She presents herself as a victim and says she is obliged to carry out this mission. From the beginning she tries to evade her responsibilities: she must obey an order. But she does not fail to recognize her most visible feature: the ability to deceive.

She even tries to excuse her own action: Polyxena is going to die, but if she does not know it, her suffering will be attenuated up to the last moment. She works for a worthy cause, because, as she judges others by her own cowardice, the deception would mean, in this case, an act of mercy.

Helena's perfidy is clearly marked. In the words she addresses to Polyxena, she tries to give her reasons so she will walk with a favourable disposition towards that false engagement. She makes a compliment to the spouse, who has a vast territory, and says that Polyxena will be related to the gods. This is the most attractive part of the proposal.

Andromache will confirm what Helena said. In a sarcastic tone, she characterizes the messenger as bearer of misfortune. She was the one who caused the ruin of Asia and Europe. The marriage now proposed can only bring a new misfortune.

In face of this accusation, Helena feels the need to defend herself. She tries to prove that she has greater reasons for suffering than the captive women. From the start she says that she does not mind facing a court and, before the cause is judged, she already finds herself acquitted. The reasons that lead her to conclude that her suffering is greater are very clear to her. In the first place, Helena can only cry for Paris in secret. If people see her crying, she loses all hopes of being forgiven by Menelaus. Besides, Helena has been captive for ten years, while the Trojan women have only been captive for a day. She adds, as a reason for suffering, the fact that she does not know how she is going to be received. On the other hand, the captive women are unfortunate, but they have company. Helena is alone: vanquished and winners hate her.

Helena even considers herself in an inferior situation, once the captive women were submitted to a draw, while she is at the mercy of her former husband.

Soon after, Helena starts expressing her weakest arguments. She says she came to Troy in a Trojan ship. She wants to inculcate the idea that she was brought by force. But if she can only cry for Paris secretly, she was not kidnapped: she accompanied him voluntarily.

As she realizes no one would accept the version of the kidnapping she then says she let herself be transported in the Trojan ship, because a goddess had decided so. Unable to admit her faults, she casts them to the gods.

Helena's uses good and bad arguments. But most of them are contradictory. The only acceptable argument is the loneliness in which she finds herself: against her are winners and vanquished.

Helena feels the contradictions in which she fell and asks Andromache for help. She shows her human side: "*it is with difficulty that I can hold back the tears*" (Tro., 925-926). It is not a simulacrum, because Andromache confirms that vague outline of crying. Helena is ashamed to be leading the young and beautiful sister-in-law to sacrifice. She seems to show mercy for the victim and for herself simultaneously.

As Andromache is not willing to help, she is compelled to reveal Polyxena's fate and she expresses the desire to have a similar one. Helena does not really want to die. She presents her intention as unattainable (Schetter, 1965): her words are a little theatrical, motivated by the contrast between her cowardly attitude and the determined attitude of her sisters-in-law.

As an answer marked by some sort of cruel and rancorous happiness (Herrmann, 1985), Helena announces the result of the draw to the different captive women, starting with Andromache. Lastly, she indicates Hecuba's fate: the old queen is a prisoner that will not last long.

In the middle of the Trojans' curses, Helena will serve as bridesmaid to Polyxena in the mournful simulacrum of the nuptial procession that precedes the damsel's sacrifice. Therefore, she plays the role of a malevolent character as bridesmaid of fatal nuptials (Schetter, 1965). She walks face down, as the contrast between her cowardice and the nobility of her sister-in-law causes her a visible discomfort.

In disagreement with the idea defended by Tsirpanlis (1970) that the character of Seneca's Helena is linear and with no depth, as opposed to Euripides' Helena, we argue that she is a complex figure (Herrmann, 1985), imposing a negative image that has a strong tradition prior to Seneca. Her drama is loneliness in misfortune. The *mora mortis* that she manifests does not convince, but little more can be said for her benefit. If she herself has difficulty accepting this form of nobility, she will hardly have another.

## CONCLUSIONS

When the time comes to return home, expected for ten years, the winners, instead of feeling happy, experience the bitter taste of triumph. The *mora maris* imposed upon them new cruelties, which overshadow the merit of their achieved victory. There is also a doubt about the success of the journey. The ships departure is nothing more than the transfer of the *mora mortis* from the vanquished to the winners who see *mora maris* transformed into *mora mortis*.

Pyrrhus is forced to fight to see his merit recognized and his father Achilles recalled. Just as in the past, also in the present he assumes his bloodthirsty, arrogant, cruel, immature, hateful character, the most disgusting of all winners. His characteristics are those typical of a tyrant, but he is not completely insensitive to the nobility of the vanquished.

Agamemnon, the noblest and perhaps the most original of all the kings of the Senecan tragedy, a moderate, understanding and patient man, tries to avoid new violence, but ends up giving in and transferring the final decision to Calchas. His intervention is structured in two different rhythms: on the one hand he stands as the defender of a new morality - a consequence of the learning provided by the fall of Troy; on the other hand, maleficence, hypocrisy, cowardice, the prevalence of individual interests over the interests of the army. He submits to fate, accepts the defeat of his good intentions, and tragedy unleashes. He learned from victory the ephemerality of greatness and the precariousness of power. He is the first to fear the consequences of *mora maris*. He represents man's communion in pain and in submission to fate - the most dense, central and unifying motif of the tragedy.

Ulysses, perfidious, lucid and cold, does everything to put an end to his drama, which is the drama of the Achaean army - the risk of a new Hector - but he cannot entirely fulfil his mission. He sees Astyanax anticipate the execution that was up to the Achaean chief and does not conceal his admiration for the child's fearlessness. He shows some signs of humanization amidst the brutality of the winners' decisions, but those signs do not hide the prevalence of the military chief's hypocrisy who performs a political mission.

Achilles no longer belongs to the world of the living, but his shadow is a fundamental element in the outcome of the tragedy: Polyxena's sacrifice.

Helena lived among the vanquished, but, at the end, the vilest figure is at the winners' service. In spite of being the cause of the ruin of Asia and Europe, she is incapable of assuming her own faults. Her most visible characteristic is the ability to deceive, but she also feels insecure concerning her fate. While preparing Polyxena for the sacrifice, she contributes to the end of the *mora maris*.

The winners' analysis in Seneca's *Troades* shows us that, from the most admired virtue (moderation) to the most despicable flaws (arrogance, brutality, tyranny, hypocrisy and cowardice), everything comes to the surface when the human being is confronted with himself and with his essence.

## REFERENCES

- Balula, J. P. R. (2010). *Formar leitores na Sociedade do Conhecimento*. Accessed in <http://hdl.handle.net/10400.19/496>
- Balula, J. P. R. (2015). Contributos para a leitura das *Troianas* de Séneca. *Ágora. Estudos Clássicos em Debate*, 17, 299-322. Accessed in [www2.dlc.ua.pt/classicos/17/12.troianas.pdf](http://www2.dlc.ua.pt/classicos/17/12.troianas.pdf)
- Boella, U. (1979). Osservazioni sulle *Troiane* di Seneca. *RSC*, 27, 66-79.
- Campos, J. A. S. (1991). *Lúcio Aneu Séneca, Cartas a Lucílio*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- Cardoso, Z. A. (2005). *Estudo sobre as tragédias de Séneca*. São Paulo: Alameda.
- Caviglia, F. (1981). *L. Anneo Seneca, Le Troiane*. Roma: Ateneo.
- Gama, N. S. (2017). Um olhar sobre Hécuba de "As Troianas" de Séneca. *Revista Brasileira de Literatura Comparada*, 18(29), 1-10. Accessed in <http://revista.abralic.org.br/index.php/revista/article/view/406/398>
- Giancotti, F. (1953). *Saggio sulle tragedie di Seneca*. Roma – Napoli – Città di Castello: Dante Alighieri.
- Herrmann, L. (1924). *Le théâtre de Sénèque*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Herrmann, L. (1985). *Sénèque, Tragédies*. I. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Matias, M. M. (2009). *Paisagens naturais e paisagens da alma no drama senequiano – Troades e Thyestes*. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos. Accessed in <https://digitalis.uc.pt/pt-pt/node/106201?hdl=2333>
- Pociña Pérez, A. (1976). Finalidad político-didáctica de las tragedias de Séneca, *Emerita*, 44, 279-301.
- Schetter, W. (1965). Sulla struttura delle *Troiane* di Seneca. *RFIC*, 93, 396-429.
- Silva, A. F. I. (2008). *O mito de Hércules recriado: da loucura trágica de Eurípides à serenidade estoica de Séneca* (Dissertação de Mestrado). Lisboa, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa. Accessed in <http://hdl.handle.net/10451/455>
- Tsirpanlis, C. (1970). Helena in Seneca's *Troades*. *Πλατων*, 22, 127-144.
- Zwierlein, O. (1986). *L. Annaei Senecae, Tragoediae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.